Fractured by Raynee_Bluestar

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Summary:

As chaos raised in Amity Park due to the increase of ghost attacks in the city, the GiW had managed to create weapons that served to neutralize spectral energy and permanently eliminate the ghosts. Vlad would rather be much more involved in this whole thing, if it weren't for the fact that Maddie had begged for his help to find her lost son. Vlad cursed, the sooner he found Daniel, the sooner he could continue with his plans with the GiW. Little he knew about what he was really getting into.

Relationships: Danny Fenton/Vlad Masters
Comments: 5
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1. Hollow

Vlad let out a sigh, unaware of his own tiredness until he heard the sound escaping his lips, his shoulders relaxed as the air left his lungs.

The fancy old clock on his wall marked 6 pm, which meant the end of another long day of work… Well, not really, just the end of one of the tasks that kept accumulating endlessly on his desk. The day would never finish so early for someone like him, yet he did know when to take a break.

He finished typing one last email and closed his laptop, he took a moment to rub his tired eyes and stood up from his extremely comfortable and expensive office's chair, then stretched his arms and walked towards the window to take in the view from his office. It was a gray evening, the sky threatened to rain at any moment, he mused, thinking about how well he would sleep with the sound of the rain that night.

As he relaxed, he took his phone to check on his messages and immediately touched one of the names that were on his most frequents list: "Maddie," and thought about how to send her some news, good news or least something that could give her any hope.

A light knock on his door brought him out of his thoughts.

"Took you long enough." Vlad said as he opened the door without bothering to look first, thinking it'd be just his secretary who finally managed to and brought him the tea he had ordered twenty minutes ago.

"Excuse me sir, here is the report. We did it as fast as we could." One of his employees responded nervously.

Vlad raised an eyebrow and quickly glanced at the papers he was handed.

"You found him?!" he exclaimed with a certain tone of excitement that immediately hid with a cough "...Are you sure it's not another mistake like the last time?" he added with feigned anger and

disinterest, while he continued to read the papers.

“Y-yes! We're sure it's him!” the man responded gingerly. “We've checked everything several times and took photos,” he reassured and handed them to him. “It was... it was hard to confirm it right away because he looks quite different from the reference photos we had, but there is no doubt that it is Daniel Fenton, sir.”

Vlad had to admit it, he was impressed. He didn't doubt that the men he hired were the best in the state, but that they had managed to succeed and bring him results under these circumstances was something remarkable.

Because at this point, he wasn't expecting to hear any news about Daniel, at least not good news.

It's been more than six and a half months since Maddie had asked for his help. She had come to his mansion one night and told him through tears that it had been more than a week since she last saw her son. One night he didn’t return home and seemed unreachable by phone since the calls only led to an answering machine. It was like he simply disappeared without a trace.

At first Vlad tried to not give too much importance to the matter. Daniel was already seventeen and surely knew how to take care of himself, especially since he was also an halfa, and of course, he knew that the young hybrid was not an easy target to defeat. After all he had been fighting him for more than four years, he had witnessed how the boy was getting better and better with his battling skills.

Plasmius and Phantom had made a silent truce that last year, when the ghosts attacks in the city began to increase. Rather, Vlad could see that the young hero was getting busier and he took the chance to take care of other -*important matters*- After this, the distance between himself and the Fenton family naturally grew. That's why he was more than surprised when Maddie knocked on his door that night, her body was soaked from the torrential rain of that day and seeing her face devastated with anguish had torn his heart.

During the first month of Daniel’s disappearance, Vlad thought that perhaps the other halfa had lost a fight and would be out there trying

to recover, he had even patrolled the surroundings of the city with no avail. The second month, he had made his research in the ghost zone for clues, but no one had seen Phantom in there lately. ClockWork was completely useless too, the ancient ghost had answered his questions very vaguely, as usual, yet his suggestion for him to stay out of this matter was clear if he read between the lines.

Some week during the third month, with the absence of the young hero, the chaos in the city began to become more and more frequent and now people could only rely on a group of Ghosts Hunters trained by the government for the security of the town.

As the months went by, he was running out of options, but Maddie was right, if Daniel was alive and somewhere in the state, he was the only one who had the right contacts and resources to find him. Of course, he didn’t skimp on costs and hired the best in the business; detectives, investigators, agents… whatever it was necessary. Although he never really thought it'd work.

It was a surprise when he reviewed the photographs in detail. Anyone else could have missed it, the person in them could not be easily identified as Daniel Fenton, he could be mistaken with any other homeless. Daniel was wearing an oversized black hoodie, which he had pulled up to cover his face as much as possible. But Vlad would recognize those blue eyes anywhere, as well as that wild hair, which apparently only had grown longer than the last time he saw it, despite the hoodie that covered most of it, he could see some misaligned black strands peeking out from behind his neck.

Vlad read the entire report meticulously and checked the details of the boy's whereabouts, it even had an address; Apparently, Daniel had been spotted on the other side of the city, and he was living in the suburbs of some seedy area. Vlad put a hand on his chin as he thought, it made sense now why no one could find him, he wasn't close to any of the areas he frequented, needless to say that the police hadn't been of any help in this case. The pamphlets that the family had distributed through the city didn't contribute much either, the difference between the Daniel in them and the one that Vlad was seeing in the photos was remarkable. The boy was much paler, which highlighted the dark bags under his eyes and took the attention away from his tired blue eyes, the oversized clothes he wore were

practically hanging off his figure, his body language was off as well. *How in blazes can someone change so much in a couple of months?!* Vlad thought, kind of shocked.

Vlad smiled to himself and set off without wasting any more time. He was a little anxious to see Daniel after so long without hearing anything from the young hybrid, although he quickly pushed that feeling deep into his chest. He was doing this for Maddie, bring her son back would make him look like someone she could trust and count on, not like the useless Jack, who couldn't even find his own son. That was definitely the only reason why he was putting all this effort.

He decided that he'd just fly to the area; it would be faster than a ridiculously long two-hours drive.

Vlad arrived at the address written on the report and landed in disbelief. How was Daniel living here? It was just a cheap apartment complex in one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city. The dirt on the streets and the lack of police in the area were already forming knots of worry in his chest. Although he ignored those thoughts again and tried to think coherently. According to the information he had, the boy would be back from his “job” in less than an hour, he decided to ignore why a seventeen-years-old was working full time at the moment… one problem at a time.

So, Vlad turned back to his human form as soon as he knew no one else was around and crossed his arms waiting for him. He leaned his back against the wall next to the apartment's door while he pondered that he actually had no idea what he was going to say to Daniel once the boy finally arrived. *Maybe I should have thought about that before.* Vlad could laugh at himself, he always thought of everything in advance, however, the desire to see the boy as soon as possible betrayed him. He let out a sigh and scoffed at himself. The younger

halfa was already frustrating him and he haven't even seen him yet.

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it was really him.

Vlad stared with open eyes at the boy who was now standing in front of him in the middle of the night, Daniel's figure was only slightly illuminated by the cold dim light that flickered on the hallway ceiling. Vlad would never admit it but he was actually relieved to see him, even under these weird circumstances.

“Well, it’s been a while, little badger.” Vlad greeted him with a smile, he tried to sound as casual as possible, he even tried to feign a somewhat sinister tone, *like the old times*. He thought it would be easier to break the ice that way. The best approach he could think of while he was waiting was to just follow the line of their old encounters; tease him a little and maybe start a fight to ease the tension, that was the normality for them. It should work.

Vlad expected an outburst, a fight, angry yells and curses from the boy, he surely should be mad because Vlad found his hiding place.

But Daniel just looked at him with his mouth slightly agape, blinked twice, walked into his apartment and closed the door without saying a word.

No fight, no insults, no scary-eyes.

Vlad was used to rejection, but being ignored by the younger halfa was a completely new feeling that he soon recognized as something unacceptable. So, in his bewilderment, he did the only thing he could think of: insist. He knocked the door loudly and called out Daniel's name a couple of times to no avail.

“Daniel, I'm going in. Don't say I didn't warn you.” He waited for a moment, but upon hearing no response he proceeded to turn intangible and simply passed through the door.

The place was… small. A simple studio apartment with just the necessary utilities to be habitable. There was a single bed next to a wall in the other side of the room where Daniel remained seated. He just… was sitting there, his eyes focused on anywhere but Vlad. Something about his posture caused a knot in the older man's chest. The boy looked extremely exhausted, and there was no angry expression on his face. In fact, something about that distant look disturbed Vlad, it just didn't feel right.

The silence remained between them for a moment, a moment that felt too long, there was nothing to be heard except for Daniel's labored breathing, as if for some reason he just couldn't breathe normally. The tension was still fresh in the air. The older man opened and closed his mouth a couple of times as he didn't really know what to say. Fortunately for him, Daniel finally decided to speak.

"What do you want fruitloop? If you're going to start some crazy monologue about how you're going to take over the city, save it for yourself and do whatever you want. I'm not in the mood."

Well, this was new. Daniel's voice sounded hollow and sharp, but at least he was talking to him now, Vlad could work with that.

"Actually, Daniel, I'm here to take you back home. Your mother is worried about you. I don't care if you're going through some teenage tantrum phase. You can fix that going to family therapy or whatever. But really, your parents are worried sick, what in blazes are you even thinking?"

Daniel was about to answer him when a roar that came from the outside interrupted him. The sounds of some windows being broken, followed by the scream of a terrified woman. A scream that announced "Ghosts!" was heard in the distance.

Oh*, sugar cookies!* This conversation was difficult enough as it was, they didn't need this kind of interruption now, Vlad cursed inwardly. He really didn't have time for this. He looked through the small window next to the kitchen to see the chaos that a couple of ghosts were causing.

"It seems that people are in need of their hero again." Vlad teased

with a smile and waited for the imminent transformation, assuming that Phantom would fly to the rescue. However, Daniel did not move an inch from his sitting position on the bed. Vlad raised an eyebrow and looked at him a little stunned by the lack of reaction.

“Nah, The Ghosts Hunters have it covered. They should be here soon.” Danny assured him with a disinterested shrug, his words were followed by a dry cough. Then he proceeded to lie down with his back on the bed, his gaze lost on the ceiling, as if he were trying his best to ignore Vlad's presence in the room.

Curiosity began to raise in Vlad’s chest once more. What was his deal? This person was nothing like the Daniel he was used to.

His eyes scanned the boy, looking for any clues or hints about what was happening to him. There wasn't much Vlad could see except from the unnatural pale skin and the dark circles under his eyes. The youngest halfa did let out some soft coughs every now and then… maybe he was sick? The older man put a hand on his chin, thinking carefully. They were hybrids, human illnesses were rare for them, yet the boy showed these weird symptoms… it didn't make any sense to Vlad… maybe Danny was under some kind of curse?

While Vlad was still lost in his thoughts, he heard a van parking in the distance and looked through the window again. A group of Ghost hunters had arrived, and it didn't take them too long to hunt down the ghosts that were causing chaos in the area. Those specters were weaklings, Vlad noted immediately, but they still managed to leave some people injured and caused several destructions in the streets -*things that Phantom could've prevented easily*- he thought bitterly, it wasn't like he really cared, but it was very obvious to him that Danny Phantom would’ve finish this more quickly and efficiently. Regardless, Vlad just looked through the window at the whole spectacle. As soon as the hunters finished, one of them climbed onto the roof of the van with a megaphone, eager to give a speech.

“Fear not, dear Amity Park Citizens. We, The Ghost Hunters will always be here to guarantee the security of the town. As the protectors of our dear residents, we would like to reassure you that those monsters will not succeed in hurting our people. Regardless, we would like to announce our special program to recruit and train people to fight against Ghosts…”

While one of them continued the speech, the others gave pamphlets of some sort to the crew of people who remained there. Vlad watched with amusement at how people listened with interest and seemed eager to join the team.

As the City Mayor, of course Vlad was aware of the ghost-fighting program, it had been sent to him for his approval in the first place. Vlad had reviewed the proposal with great interest, since normal people had no way to defend themselves against the ghosts and lately the attacks in the city had only increased, it was being troublesome for everyone. Things had escalated so much that the Ghost Hunters were receiving help from the Guys in white, and apparently the latter group had somehow succeeded in creating weapons for the defense of citizens that were capable of not only neutralize but also *eliminate* spectral threats. Vlad was very interested in finding out how the GiW researchers had managed to create such powerful weapons. All of this could be incredibly beneficial and lucrative for him and he was more than eager to use it in his advantage...

Another dry cough brought him out of his thoughts… *Right, Daniel*. The sooner he got him back home, the sooner he could go back to focus on his schemes.

He turned to redirect his attention to the younger halfa, who, to Vlad's surprise, had changed his position. He was now laying onto his left side and had turned his back towards Vlad, as if he were ready to fall asleep at any moment, even though he was fully dressed.

"Daniel, I'm not going to say it again, I'm going to take you back home whether you like it or not, so do me in favor and get up," Vlad said in a sharp tone, his patience was already reaching its limit.

"Oh, you are still here?" Daniel said, feigned surprise.

"Listen Daniel, I don't know what's going on with you. But couldn't you at least talk to your parents? Do you have any idea how worried your friends and family are about you? I didn't think you were someone so irresponsible and selfish. Aren't you supposed to be a hero?" Vlad blurted out, frustration was already taking over him.

"Oh, like you really care. Cut the crap, fruitloop. I know you're here

because you're up to something," Daniel spat, he sat up again and, to Vlad's surprise, finally deigned to look at him in the eyes. "Listen, I know you're doing this to please my mom or whatever, But I'll make it clear: I *can't* go home. So, I would be really grateful if you do me a favor and just leave me alone."

Well, apparently the boy could still answer to him coherently. Vlad never thought that hearing Daniel's ramblings would relieve him this much, but it did. This was the Daniel he knew.

"What do you mean you can't go back?" Vlad asked, almost demanding a response from the younger hybrid.

"That's none of your business, but listen, I propose you a deal."

"…a deal?" Vlad raised an eyebrow with interest. Was Daniel trying to negotiate with him? Was the naïve hero, Daniel Fenton trying to negotiate with him?

"I won't stand in your way anymore. Whatever you try to do with the city or whatever you're planning, I won't try to stop you and I won't try to beat you. In exchange I only ask for you to not tell anyone that you've found me. You can tell them I'm dead if you want." Daniel offered, the determination in his eyes surprised the older man.

Vlad thought about it for a moment. That was all? Was the young hero just going to step aside and let him do whatever he wanted? No more fights? Not having to deal with Phantom trying to stop him in the middle of his plans was certainly something tempting, especially now with everything that was going on in the city. But... it couldn't be that easy, could it? His mind went back to the image of Maddie again, he remembered her pleas to find her son and return him safely. As selfish as Vlad was, he couldn't just tell his former...*friends* that his son had died and step away from this…whatever *this* was.

He looked back at Daniel, who was still looking at him with a serious, expectant expression, and then sighed. "Deal rejected." Vlad announced him with a smile. "Nice try anyway, you're becoming more and more like me over the years... I must say, I'm quite flattered."

“What the...” Daniel started to complain, but stopped talking when Vlad took a step towards the bed.

“Like I said Daniel, you’re coming with me.” The older man said, and reached out his hand to take the boy’s arm.

Everything happened so fast in that moment. Vlad's hand had barely reached Danny's right forearm and the boy had flinched as if it were on fire. Daniel's expression changed to one of absolute terror and crawled back as quickly as he could to the other end of the bed, only stopping when his back met the wall.

“Don’t. Touch. Me.” Daniel practically growled in anger, and Vlad would have been worried about how his voice almost broke at the end, if it weren't for the fact that he was focused on something more important.

It was just an instant in which his hand had touched him, but it was enough for Vlad to feel it... or rather, to NOT feel it. Normally, every time he touched the boy, he could feel his energy radiating from his core. Vlad knew that since they were hybrids, they both shared this quality. Daniel, being younger and having less experience, probably hadn't noticed it, but Vlad could always distinguish very well the distinctive cold energy that emanated from Daniel's core, it was a sensation similar to static. It was like their signature, something that confirmed their existence. However, this time he felt nothing in his fingers.

The older halfa observed with surprise how Daniel, who had practically stuck himself to the wall, was trembling slightly and looked like he only wanted to disappear from the place.

…And yet he didn't do it.

Something clicked in Vlad's mind in that moment.

Pale skin, coughs, extreme tiredness and the fact that he hadn't seen him transform in all this time... It was all so obvious that he didn't understand how he could have missed it.

“Daniel... your core is...” Vlad began, his arm was still extended and

his hand was still touching the empty space where Daniel had been a second ago. He didn't really know how to finish the phrase; he didn't want to jump to conclusions. He needed to do a correct analysis, but still…

“No! Go away, leave me alone!” Daniel kept saying, almost whimpered, terror visible in his eyes.

Vlad saw the boy's state and although he found that reaction strange, he took another step closer, he needed to confirm it.

Vlad approached the boy again and tried to ignore the way Daniel flinched and tensed when he grabbed his arm to kept him still. He pressed his other hand against Daniel's chest and concentrated on feeling for his core, he expected to find something. With much effort he recognized a slight, almost imperceptible signal from it, but it was indeed worryingly low.

“Daniel, what happened to your core?” Vlad asked, the tone of concern evident in his voice, perhaps too much for his liking.

“I said leave me alone!” Daniel responded, still clearly altered. His open eyes were desperately looking for a way to escape from his own apartment, as if he were a cornered animal. Vlad shuddered at the sight.

“Daniel...” *I'm just trying to help you*. Vlad thought, but the words never met his lips. The sight of the young hybrid in that state was not pleasant to him. They were supposed to be rivals, enemies or even allies if the situation required it. He'd never say it but over the years he had started to even consider him as an equal. Daniel shouldn't be afraid of him.

In an attempt to free himself from his grasp, Daniel used all his strength to throw his arm away, and in one quick movement he got up off the bed and attempted to ran towards the door, only for his legs to betray him. Vlad watched incredulous how the boy fell unconscious to the ground. Apparently, his body had collapsed due to exhaustion or because he really wasn't in a state to make such sudden efforts.

Vlad stood there, processing what had just happened. He didn’t really understand how they had gotten to this point, the only thing he knew was that now he was standing in front of Daniel's unconscious body.

2. So Cold

Chapter 2: So cold

"Wise men wonder while
Strong men die..."

[...You're so cold
But you feel alive
Lay your hands on me
One last time

Show me how it ends, it's alright
Show me how defenseless you really are
Satisfied and empty inside
That's alright, let's give this another try.- So cold by Breaking Benjamin]

- Vlad

Vlad pinched the bridge of his nose, exasperated, confused and angry, all at once. He couldn't just return the boy to his mother now, could he?

He meditated as he contemplated Daniel's unconscious body in front of him.

Something was clearly wrong, and if his theory was correct, then Daniel's condition was only about to get worse.

He really hoped to be mistaken this time.

Vlad sighed and carried Daniel in his arms, worry raised in his chest when he felt how light his body was. He decided to take him to his lab to analyze him properly. He knew Daniel wouldn't be happy with this, but what else could he do? Leave him like that? It wasn't like he had any other option.

Vlad didn't lose any time once he arrived home. Immediately placed

the younger halfa on the operation table and let the anesthesia do its work to ensure the boy wouldn't wake up in the middle of the tests, last thing he needed was to scare him again.

First, he took Daniel's hoodie off, a weird smile met his face when he saw that his typical white t-shirt was underneath it, a little dusty and tear but still recognizable. Then he took a blood sample from the boy's left arm, trying to ignore the apparently old bruises that covered most of his skin.

He pressed his hand against Daniel's chest and tried to feel for his core again, only to find nothing. Not even the slight signal he felt before.

It took his computer only a moment to process the blood results.

Low blood pressure.

Low blood sugar.

Anemia.

Calcium deficiency.

Low iron.

Chronic dehydration.

Electrolyte imbalance.

Faint erratic pulse.

Predictably, none of his vital signs were good. Vlad swallowed hard, and looked back at Daniel who was sleeping pacifically on the table.

He reached the younger hybrid's hair and caressed it slightly, without knowing exactly why he was doing it. Perhaps it was just a way to distract himself from the feeling of uneasiness that kept growing inside his chest as he waited for the core analysis to pop up in the screen.

Daniel Fenton

Spectral core status: processing

...

…

…

Why it was taking so long? Normally this kind of analysis only took about five minutes. He had done this test on himself a thousand times!

…

Daniel Fenton

Spectral core status: unknown.

Please review the sample and try again.

Well, he should have expected that.

If the core's energy was indeed so low that he couldn't always feel it, then it made sense that his computer couldn't detect it easily either.

“Sorry for the intromission,” he said aloud to Daniel’s unconscious figure, and proceeded to take off the boy’s t-shirt.

Vlad grimaced when he took a proper look to Daniel’s body. There were bruises and scars all over his chest and arms, among with others that peeked from underneath the top of his jeans and reached his waist, judging by the dark color he could say that they weren't recent, but that only meant that the healing hadn't been working properly for a while. Not a good sign.

Vlad sighed and prepared an IV nutrition treatment bag for Daniel; he quickly attached it to a plastic tube and then placed the needle in the crook of his elbow.

He took another sample, this time directly from the boy's chest since it was the place where most of the core's energy remained, and waited for the results to load.

Vlad took that time to carefully exanimate the bruises that covered his body. The ones that covered his wrists suggested that he had been restrained. The ones on the rest of his arms were signs of a fight, an indication that he had resisted with all his might, until he just couldn't.

There was a long sharp scar about five inches wide across his chest, it covered all the way down to his waist. Vlad absently touched it, his mind was blank, the texture of the skin there was rough, it contrasted with the softness of the rest of his body.

…

Daniel Fenton

Spectral core status: inactive

Spectral core presence on DNA: 10%

…

8,3%,

…

5,2%,

…

7,1%

…

9,3%

…

The numbers kept changing, the core level oscillated in a range between the five percent and ten percent, in a loop.

it shouldn't be possible. Vlad refused to believe it, but all the evidence was there in front him.

Daniel had been forcefully separated from his ghost half.

But this time was nothing like the others. Vlad was aware of the Fenton-ghost-catcher, he also knew that the portal could get rid of the ghost powers. But whoever did this didn't even have the knowledge or the technology to do it correctly. To get rid of a spectral half was not as easy as it seemed, if it wasn't done precisely the consequences could be fatal.

He inevitably took another look to the long scar on his chest. If it were caused by a fight then it wouldn't look like that. This looked like something done with certain precision, like someone had deliberately cut him open, for any sick reason, as if they wanted to take something from Daniel's insides…

And then, the realization hit him.

Daniel had not only been ripped off his powers.

He had been torn apart.

Vlad's fists clenched.

Someone… some sick animal tried to take his core by forcefully tearing it apart and now Daniel's body was deteriorating due to the small fragment that remained rooted to his chest, it refused to detach itself and consequently was using the body nutrients to compensate the lack of spectral energy.

Daniel needed to reform with Phantom soon, or he would die.

Vlad sat in a chair next to the table to think for a moment. He needed something to keep the boy alive in the meantime. Ectoplasm injections should work for a while, but he knew they'd just delay the body's imminent consumption.

He looked at Daniel when he heard how his soft breathing altered a

little, afraid he could wake up. *The little badger must be in agony,* he thought bitterly as he stroked his hair again, an inevitable feeling of sympathy dominated him, who knew for how long he had been under this condition. If only he had found him sooner...

He shook his head, there was no point in regret it now. He stood up and quickly prepared the ectoplasm's solutions. Determination settled all over him as he injected the needle in Daniel's arm. They'd need to work together to get Phantom back.

Vlad took Daniel off the table once the IV was consumed and put him to rest in the bed in one of the mansion guest rooms, he dressed him with a night's shirt, and then sat on a single couch opposed to the bed. He didn't want to leave Daniel alone, who knew how he'd react once he wake up. He hoped he could talk to him though. Surely, he'd cooperate with him, right? It was his life that was on the line after all.

Consciousness returned to him suddenly and he startled on the couch as his eyes opened. He quickly looked at his phone, the time displayed 3:08 am, Vlad cursed, that meant he had been sleeping for about two hours.

Vlad lifted his gaze when he heard the soft sound of the sheets being moved, surprised to find a very much awoken Daniel looking fiercely at him.

"It must be hilarious to you, isn't it?" Daniel said, his face illuminated by the moonlight's ray that came through the window beside the bed, the silver light highlighted the hateful in his eyes, his hands were grabbing the sheets tightly, his knuckles stuck out.

"…Huh?" Vlad stupidly mumbled, stunned and taken aback by the sharpness in Daniel's voice.

"This is your chance; you finally have me at your might." Daniel clarified for him, and lifted his arms as he did an exaggerated gesture of triumph, imitating Plasmius from years ago. "Come on, don't you want to finish the job that others have started?"

Vlad grimaced in disgust just at the thought. “Daniel, I’m not going to step over a clearly defenseless…*kid,*” he said in lack of a better word.

“I’m not a kid!” Daniel responded angrily as his body moved unconsciously forward, the sudden movement made him wince, pain visible in his face.

“Then stop acting like one!” Vlad retorted, and exasperatedly put a hand on his forehead, a headache raised. “Painkillers are in the drawer,” he said and gestured him to look at the bedside table, there was a glass of water prepared too.

Daniel glanced at the glass; a frown formed on his face.

“I’m not trying to poison you, you know?” Vlad reassured him sarcastically, and inevitably smiled at the young hybrid’s oh-so-innocent distrust.

Daniel cautiously opened the drawer. He looked at the painkillers but didn’t immediately took them. “…Why?”

“Because… Daniel, if I wanted you dead, I could have killed you four years ago.” Vlad said sincerely, as if it were something so obvious… cause yeah, it was the truth. At first, he wanted him to be his apprentice, the perfect little son. Then, there was a time when he wanted to get him out his plans, but the later years, he just kept fighting with him for fun or something like that, he wasn’t even sure. But he did know that he didn’t want the only other hybrid like him to be gone.

He watched as Daniel put the painkillers inside his mouth and drank the water. Silence followed right after and dominated the space between them, *again*.

When he saw how Daniel bowed his head and averted his gaze to the window, Vlad decided to speak again because… screw it, these awkward moments between them were too many already, he didn’t like it.

“So…” He started after feign a cough to caught the boy’s attention. “Care to tell me how it happened?”

Daniel startled, his eyes opened and he looked at his arms, finding the needle's pricks. "You… you looked…?" He inquired; the indignation was recognizable in each word.

"I just took some blood samples," Vlad quickly said "I didn't fully exanimate you, just your chest…" he assured him. "I'd have known anyways; it was obvious just by looking at you."

Daniel sighed at his response. "Then you already know," he mumbled, more to himself than to Vlad. "It is what it is, I can't do anything against you or any other ghost anymore... Guess I deserved it for playing the hero and all that," he plainly said, there was a certain tone of finality in his voice that Vlad didn't like one bit.

"But why didn't you try to reach your family or your friends? May be your parents don't know but your friends could have helped you." Vlad asked, genuinely curious. He needed to know so many things about this.

"I'm going to die." Daniel answered, matter-of-factly. "I couldn't just go back home and then let my family watch how my body consumed itself. That'd destroy them." He stated, an expression of guilt crossed his face for a moment.

Vlad stared at the younger hybrid intently in the eyes as he talked, surprised by his words. He didn't expect that answer but he should've.

This is Daniel after all, always playing the hero, always thinking about others instead of his own well-being…

Wait…

"You… YOU KNEW?!" Vlad exclaimed. He had stood up from the couch before he had even realized it. Daniel just looked at him with a frown.

"Uh… of course? Why wouldn't I know? It's my body…" He said as stating the obvious.

"No. Daniel" Vlad pinched the bridge of his nose and closed his eyes as exasperation took over him. "You KNEW that you were going to die and did nothing to stop it?!"

“What else was I supposed to do?” The younger halfa responded, fury dominated his voice again. “I can't do anything as a human. Plus, is not like I have any allies to count on. It's too dangerous to involve Sam and Tucker in this, I don't want to risk them.”

“You could have told ME!” Vlad shouted, he couldn't believe what *his* little…- what the little badger was saying. “We have been allies before, we had stood in the same front, we had a truce!” Vlad kept shouting, indignation and frustration taking all over him, *again*.

“A truce…? What truce?” Daniel sincerely asked, the frown on his face deepened. Vlad took a step back as he took in the look of confusion in the boy’s face.

“You… don't remember? Last year we didn't even fight. I did let you do your things and you let me do mine.”

Daniel looked pensive; Vlad could see that he was trying very hard to remember their last interactions. Why on earth he couldn't?

“…Sorry, my mind is kinda fuzzy,” he said simply and shrugged it off. Vlad sighed, defeated.

“It has been a long night for us both.” Vlad concluded when he saw the tiredness in Daniel’s eyes. “Just take a rest here. We can talk more about this later.”

Daniel laughed sarcastically at that “Do I have any other choice?” Daniel said with his teeth clenched, resignation and exhaustion all over his voice and face. “I couldn't go even if I wanted, I can't even stand.”

“Hm, so you already tried?” Vlad asked, unimpressed.

“You were asleep when I woke up. I tried to get up but my legs didn’t respond,” he commented casually as he tried to move them once more with no avail. “What did you give me?”

“Just some sedatives. You'll be fine in a few hours. I promise.” Vlad answered and tried to reassure him when he saw how Daniel rolled his eyes.

“You can trust me, little badger.” Vlad tried again.

“Yeah sure.” Daniel said, coolly.

“...Daniel, I propose you a deal.” Vlad said suddenly, an idea crossed his mind as he remembered the events from a few hours ago, when they were in that damn apartment.

“Huh… a deal?” Daniel raised an eyebrow and Vlad smiled, seeing that he had finally caught his interest.

“I won't tell your family that I have found you, in exchange I only ask for you to stay here for a few days and then you can decide if you want to go or not.” Vlad offered, the soft tone of his voice sounded strange even for him.

The younger hybrid looked at him a little surprised, and thought about it for a moment. Vlad waited expectantly.

“…Okay,” Daniel said softly as he nodded off a little, Vlad could see that he was trying his best to not fall asleep in that moment.

“Okay” his mind echoed.

That was all he needed. The older halfa couldn't help it and gave the boy a satisfied smile.

“Good,” he said contented and then turned to leave the room and let him rest, he walked to the door, relieved at the thought that the younger hybrid wouldn't escape from his house, at least not for now.

“Oh, and that's how you negotiate with someone, by the way.” Vlad added as he looked back to the room from the other side of the door, a mocking smile settled all over his face, which earned a furious glare from Daniel.

“Fuck you.”

“Good night little badger.”

Notes for the Chapter:

Well, hello there! I wasn't sure if I ever would post this but here we are. Somehow, I've found myself immersed in Danny Phantom again and simply couldn't get this idea out of my head. So, I'm just writing it and may be, someone else would enjoy it? Idk.
Please note the rating and the tags, this fic could get a little darker (as if it weren't already...).
Anyways, kudos and comments are always appreciated, have a nice day <3